

## Three Types of Marginal Contrast

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This talk will present three types of marginal contrast (quasi-phonemicity/near-allophony) and discuss their implications for phonological theory.

(1) Frequency and word class. In some varieties of RP, there is a marginal contrast between short and long /?/. Long /?/ only occurs in a handful of highly frequent monosyllabic nominals ending in a voiced non-continuant, mostly adjectives like 'sad', while the short variant is used elsewhere.

(2) Expressiveness. In other languages, marginal terms may be restricted to an expressive part of the vocabulary (e.g. sound-symbolic). In North Saami, the aspirated rhotic /hr/ is almost exclusively restricted to verbs denoting sounds with a pronounced noise component, such as 'sputter', 'grate' or 'neigh'. Otherwise plain /r/ is found.

(3) Morphological 'override'. In Javanese, the distribution of ATR and RTR high vowels appears largely governed by syllable structure (ATR in open syllables, RTR in closed syllables). The so-called elative (intensive) form of the adjective, however, involves ablaut of the final vowel to a high ATR vowel regardless whether the syllable is open or closed.

A common strategy for dealing with facts like these in generative phonology is to attempt to isolate the marginal term of contrast by relegating it to a special subsystem (e.g. lexical stratum with a distinct grammar or cophonology; Inkelas, Orgun and Zoll 1997, Ito and Mester 2003) or trying to define morphological conditions for overriding canonical phonological patterns (Benua 1999). I will argue both of these approaches fail for empirical and conceptual reasons. Empirically, the relevant domains, although clear, have fuzzy boundaries. Thus the frequency distributions of /?/ and /?:/ in RP overlap, in North Saami /hr/ occurs in a couple of nouns that lack the relevant lexical semantics, and in Javanese, ATR high vowels in closed syllables are found outside the elative environment. On the conceptual side, these treatments end up confusing levels of description, or distinct modules of grammar. In the spirit of Kager (2003), who argues for eliminating exceptionality from the grammar, I argue marginal contrasts must be seen as fully included in the unique monolithic grammatical system of the language. The explanation of the clustering properties of marginal terms of contrast must be sought rather in (ultimately neurophysiological) analogical processes operating in lexical memory.